THE BANNER SERIES OF SELECTED SHORT STORIES

The One Who Thought

By James Barnes

Author of "The Great War Trek."



E WAS the junior sub-altern and he could boast five months' service almost to a day. He pos-sessed a tendency to blush and a slight impediment in his speech pediment in his speech that was half stammer, half lisp. His curly hair was cut short, and his helmet, which was a trifle large, came down over his ears. There was no danger of its falling off, however, for he al-ways were the strap under his chin, and it had stenciled a little white line in the sun-burned red of his face. His regiment was one

where they preserve old-time traditions. They rose and saluted the colonel upon every possible occasion, they "sir"-ed each other left and right, and the junior subaltern was never expected to express an opinion upon any question whatever. The regiment had a fighting record behind it, and was as good as any of the other shire regiments; and that means that it was as good as any that ever wore red or khald. Now, on this day it had marched some twelve South

African miles (which means a good twenty this side of the water), and incidentally it had climbed one or two rocky kopies, and struggled through a half score of dry, sandy sluits, down one bank and up the other. It had waded three drifts deep in clinging, black mud; and when waded three drifts deep in clinging, black mud; and when it had settled down for the evening, the bulk of the transport was a matter of four miles or more behind. Most of the blankets and great coats were on the wagons, and it was going to be cold. Twilight had merged into moonlight, and overhead in the clear African sky very early the great stars were blazing and twinkling, and somehow if was have been the march or the moonly to one how (it may have been the march or the moon), no one seemed much inclined to talk. The mers was not very large. To look at it, no one would have recognized in the thin-faced, tired-looking men in the smudged yellow uniforms, the officers of one of the smartest of the line; nor would any one have known, after seeing the bivouac, that it was a regiment at all.

When the troopship left England it had numbered 1250

stalwart young fellows, keen on life and eager for fight-ing. Most of them talked with a bit of their own shire twist in their speech that betrayed them as much as the little printed name-white on red-on the left side of their belimets. But now the quartermaster sergeant could have told you that they numbered exactly 553, and that included the colonel and the bugler boy.

The rest-Lord knows where they were! Some had gone back to England to be repaired (perhaps damaged beyond all hope); others were still in the hospitals, scattered as far back as the long trail extended; a few were on details (thumping along with the M. I., some), and the rest, who were not present to answer to their names, lay beneath little unmarked rocky heaps, lost and forgotter, somewhere out in the wide-stretching veldt. They can show one place, however, where twenty lie together; and they can show you a hill that is remembered be-cause they had something to do with making it different from other hills.

But to come back to this night. The colonel was grumpy because the little cart that was his own and car-ried his particular brand of whisky and cigars had broken down at the second drift, and the wagon to which his belongings had been transferred had not yet arrived. The rest of the mess were grumpy at having to go out on this wild-goose chase of an expedition, when they had rather have stopped in the town back there, which was a conquered one, with a conquered club and conquered privi-

leges.
"I think"—began the junior sub, suddenly breaking the silence, and then he faltered. They looked round at him, and the colonel, from his seat on the biscuit box, stopped spreading some caviar on a big piece of soggy Boer bread and glared at him.

"And what the devil makes you think that" put in the colone, taking his cue from the senior captain.

"I don't know, sir," returned the boy. "I was just thinking, and we don't see their fires."

The fact was that he had first spoken aloud without meaning to.

"Well, what if they have?" pursued the colonel, addressing the adjutant this time. "It's their business to keep in touch with us, anyhow, ch?"

I should suppose so," returned the adjutant, laconfacily.

dressing the adultant this time. Its their business to keep in touch with us, anyhow, ch?"

"I should suppose so," returned the adjutant, laconically.

"I do think they kept a bit ahead, sir," put in the lieutenant of G Company. "Old Spuff told me he expected to hivouac on the other side, near the pan. He was out there last week, you know, and knows the ground."

"Confound him," said the colonel; "he can't expect my men to keep up even with his bony old hat-racks when a third of them haven't any soles to their boots. What the devil we were sent out here for beats me, anyway, I'll wager there isn't a Boer within fourteen miles."

"I heard to-day that the Boers were on their way to this very place," put in the boy.

"And how did you hear that?" asked the senior captain. "By a we are becoming very knowin."

"There was a Kaffir by the read speke to one of our Kaflir boys, and I asked him, and he told me, sir."

"Humph, Kaffirs!" snorted the major, who hitherto had not spyken a word.
"It was reported to me at the time, colonel," spoke up a broad-shouldered young fellow sitling close to the fire. "I didn't think it worth noticing." He closed his silver eigarette case with a snap.

The rest of the mess, who had paid just enough attention to the conversation to follow it, smiled. Kaffirs' talles were worse than old wives. It was conceded that a black would tell another anything that came into his head, and tell white men only the things he thought they would like to hear.

"He—he was a very Intelligent-looking Kaffir," stammered the boy, "I think—"

head, and tell white men only the things he thought they would like to hear.

"He—he was a very intelligent-looking Kaffir," stammered the boy, "I think—"

"You better go turn into your blankets, youngster," said the major.

"No," put in the thick-set, gray-templed young captain, "He's on guard with Mallon."

"Have you stationed the outposts?" saked the colonel in an undertope. He generally left everything to his adjutant, who was a better soldier than he was, and he knew it.

"Yes, sir," was the reply in the official voice, "There's one back there near the drift, sir, and Mallon and his company are off here on the slope of this kopie. Couldn't get 'em up to the top; it's too steep, and the men were done."

How about this side?" asked the colonel, pointing to "How about this side?" asked the colonel, pointing to mother great black hill, whose rocky shape was moulded into soft shadow and rounded outline by the moonlight, "Gergeant and eight men over there, sir. Besides, I think the youngster was right; the cavairy has gone inrough the nek. They will probably get their outposts pp the hill, and if they don't, they're guardin' the other side anyhow. We're all right.
"Don't think there is a Boer within twenty miles," observed it's colonel, adding a good six to his previous estimate.

"Don't think there is a Boor within their previous eatherwed it's colonel, adding a good six to his previous eatherate.

The officers who were going on outpost had had their itanket rolls carried out by their servants. The subaltern nuttened his coat tight under his chin, and, leaving the anody circle of the firelight, began to climb the hill on the light of the road.

Mallon was only lleutenant, but he was in command if the company, and the fact that it was a good one relected great credit upon the sub and the first sergeant, ar kallon, brave as a man could be, and a good sporting

"FIX BAYONETS!" PUT IN THE SUB SUDDENLY

chap, was never made for a soldier. The routine part of chap, was never made for a soldier. The routine part of it bored him; he confessed the fact frankly. Besides this, he was lazy and a bit careless. He grunted a few questions to the sergeant, who replied—heels together, arms stiff—"Yes, sir; yes, sir," to each one, whereon Mallonwriggled his huge shape under the kaross of his sleeping-sack, and stowed his head in the shadow of a big rock out of the moon glare.

But the sub walked a few yards up the slope and sat

But the sub walked a few yards up the slope and sat down. He was still thinking. He remembered the excited gesticulations of the Kaffir that he had seen talking to the voorlooper of the big ox-wagon. He recalled the fact that the man appeared to be out of breath, and that his bare legs were dusty above the knees. The black who had translated the message had been excited, too. Perhaps there might be some truth in it! He looked over his

The steep sides of the kopje towered four or five hundred feet above him. Then he lowered his eyes. The men lay here and there, huddled among the rocks. The sergeant, pulling sleepily at his pipe, was propped up with his back to a great boulder. The boy went over to him. "Sergeant-No; as you were!-don't get up. Haven't

we got a man farther up the hill here?"

The sergeant struggled to his feet.
"Yes, sir," said he, "there's a post up there, sir, by

"How far?"

"Oh, a good bit, sir."

The sub walked away and sat down on the rock again, and the sergeant sank down in his old position. The moon rose and grew bigger and brighter. The sky was blue. Things were not masses merely, but resolved themselves into colors in the clear light. It was a night that one never sees in England, nor, in fact, anywhere, except in South Africa or fairyland. The very earth seemed to sparkle, and the water in the nearest spruit shone like

"I-I think," began the boy again, this time stammering slightly.

The boy took a letter from his pocket. He had really at first taken it out to see if he could read it, and finding that it was no task at all, he went on to the end.

do you think?"

"I think that the cavalry has gone through the nek, sir."

"And what the devil makes you think that?" put in

"There came into the boy's mind, as he sat there with the letter in his fingers, the picture of an old man walking up the pathway of an English garden. Then, in his imagination, the boy followed the old gentleman into the hallway of the big house, with the staring windows that

imagination, the boy followed the old gentleman into the hallway of the big house, with the staring windows that overlooked the terraces.

This letter that he had read by the moonlight was from his grandfather, an old solder who knew the Mutiny and the Crimea, and could remember shaking hands, as a state of the life of the life

been there and had seen it. But the rest had apparently forgotten, and he was only a subaltern—so what was the sol?

He looked down at the bright valley. He could see the smouldering embers of the fires; he could see the brown shapes of some Kaffir kraais, huddled away near the last drift, and farther off there rose a line of trees, narrow and straight, like the ones that come with a child's Noah's Ark. There was a Boer farm house nesting there. Hethought he saw a light in the window. A few belated wagons of the transport were struggling up the road. He leaned his head back and looked up at the stars, and now he was thinking not of war, but of anythings that came in his head. He thought of his mother; he belief ye remembered her; other chaps had mothers to writely remembered her; other writely remembered her with the was an orphan and had nothing but a foolish, gabbling old granddad He got thinking of home and school and the Thames, and some girls he knew, and what a stranse to london, and so he went to sleep.

He awoke because it was still light, with an uncertain shadowless skyglare. He looked at the watch ne went back to london, and so he went to sleep.

He awoke because it was still light, with an uncertain shadowless skyglare. He looked at the watch ne went back to like with a stranse to

try! He turned and looked back to the valley again.

The fire embers were out; there was a chilly mist spread along the stream bed, and the voices of the Kalley drivers had hushed. "The transport's in; that's one bless-ing," he thought. His foot struck something that rattled. He stooped down and picked it up. It was a little paste-board box, yellow in color and made to imitate wood fibre. There was something printed on it in German. The boy knew what it was, for he had seen hundreds of them— the little boxes in which the Mauser cartridges in clips of the little boxes in which the Mauser carriages in claps of five were packed. So the Boers had been there! Oh, yes, he remembered—of course—it was here that they had the skirmish ten days ago when poor old Jack Leonard, of the lumbering, well-intentioned "M. I.," was pipped through both lungs. There might be something more about. The sub-bent over, and then straightened himself and bent over again.

There in a little pack of sand, between two big rocks,

There, in a little patch of sand, between two big rocks, were the marks of horses' hoofs. Small, unshed hoofs! He was not enough of a scout to know if they were fresh or not-but how had they got there? Nothing but a goat could have climbed the hill the way he had come. Then could have climbed the fill the way he had tolke. Then suddenly he saw he was in a path, a tortuous, narrow path that twisted in and out among the boulders, but kept close to the base of the sheer gtone wall that rose above it. Next question—where did this silly, foolish path lead to? "Must go somewhere," he thought. "I see; it's a

to? "Must go somewhere," he thought. "I see; it's a short cut into the nck."
"Deuced odd," said the sub aloud. So he followed it

for perhaps two hundred yards.

Now he remembered having noticed, ever since he had seen the kopie from atar, a jarged, brown line, like a split or cleft that ran down its side from the crest halfway to the middle.

The path led to the bottom of the jagged brown line. "Well, I never," thought the sub as he stumbled along. But when he came to the place where the trail, after a double round a big rock, turned sharp to the left, he stood and whistled. The brown line was not a crack. It was the opening into a narrow pass that almost divided the

the opening into a narrow pass that almost divided the hill in two, and the path led, steep and straight, to the very top. It was very dark, but he could see a patch of white light rising like a cloud way up on the rim.

"Here's a go," he thought. "What if?—" He turned and looked over his shoulder at the valley—"Gad, I'll risk it. I can get up and back before relief." So he went up the steep incline, sometimes on his hands and knees, but going it for what was in him. In less than five minutes he clambered out into the centre of the patch of light, and he saw how things were. The narrow mass, was cally a going it for what was in him. In less than five minutes he clambered out into the centre of the patch of light, and he saw how things were. The narrow pass was only a dent in the kopie side that led down to the lower opening. The top of the kopie was quite flat, and the boulders were not so big as down below. But he soon forgot nearby things in looking far away all around him. He had the strange sense of unreality that one feels upon suddenly coming out into the vantage spot of a panorama. It looked quite artificial, and yet it made him dizzy. In his imagination he could see just where the foreground ended imagination he could see just where the foreground ended and the canvas began. The view seemed to stretch up and down, painted so skilfully that he would like to go up closer to see how it was done. And the reason for this was the stillness—nothing moved, nothing sounded. He walked over to the edge, where he could look down on the sleeping regiment.

was the stillness—nothing moved, nothing sounded. Ho walked over to the edge, where he could look down on the sleeping regiment.

He could only make out the wagons; everything elso faded into the color of the earth and rocks; but as he looked he saw a spurt of flame, and then another. He could see some dim figures moving, and he knew that the fires were being lighted. At the same time there came from ever so far (from the Kaffir kraals, more than likely), the sharp, clear crow of a cock.

It was wonderful how all these things brought the sense of reality to him. The moon was sinking behind the distant line of hills, but there was a glare in the east that he knew well enough. The dawn was breaking! Follifted the watch in his little leather bracelet to his ear. It was stopped.

The sub swore softly, not very bad swear words—stammering a little as he did so. What would the others say? Of course, he had a right to go to sleep fine wished to, but he should have been awake at the time relief was posted. Mallon probably saw him, and space anaturedly let him rest. Mallon wouldn't say anything about it; to be sure, it was lucky nothing had huppened. But the gray, shadowless light was widening prowing. It was astonishing how the dawn camera rushed up and fairly split out of the casternaky. The sub started suddenly and paused. He had caucht a glimpse of a man's head and shoulders almost a mile away rising above the big stones on the cliff side. The man's back was turned, and he was waving his hand as if wafting some one to him.

Now, what the sub saw when he moved a little (keep.

head and shoulders almost a mile away rising above the big stones on the cliff side. The man's back was turned, and he was waving his hand as if wafting some one to him.

Now, what the sub saw when he moved a little (keeping well out of sight) was enough to lift his helmet well off the bridge of his nose, it started creepy feelings down his back and tingling patches back of his ears. The path, that ran along the ridge top, sloping slightly northward in a half circle was full of men! Shaggy, unkempt men on shaggy, unkempt horses! Some were dismounting, others were going u the little slope in the direction of the beckoning art. The sub did not stop to count, but he judged there must be at least five hundred, for the litne ran back as far as he could see. Preceded by a small avalanche of rolling stones, he rushed down the steep path by which he had ascended. There went a Mauser! "Ca-pow," another. "Nacl.-cri!" There answered a Lee-Metford from somewhere down the slope. Just as he plunged into the open there down the slope. Just as he plunged into the open there down the slope. Just as he plunged into the open there down the slope. Just as he plunged into the open there down the slope. Just as he plunged into the open there down the slope. Just as he plunged into the open there down the slope. Just as he plunged into the open there is a volument where the devill—you is you there! Hut! Halt al! B Company!" The sub didn't know his own volce. "Gregeant, where's Mr. Mallon?— Halt those men-bring them back here."

'Orders, was to—sir."

'Titing cin back. I'm giving orders!"

'Titing cin back. I'm giving orders!"

'Yes, sir,' was year the sergeant down the hill.

Yes, sir,' way went the sergeant down the hill.

Yes, sir,' way went the sergeant and the sub thought of those small, sharpe-ione man was tying up the ends of a putter wrapped round his foot, for he had no right boot, and merely the trace of a left. The sub thought of those small, sharpe-ione man was tying up the ros—sed met wenty men and ammunition—we can save

seemed all round, even behind, and the guns were still at it. They had not moved!

The enemy in front seemed to be less in numbers.

They had apparently gone off to left and right. There was a line of firing stretching away to the eastward.

It was getting very warm; the sub guessed it must be

nearly 9 o'clock. How much longer would they be able to stay there? The men had settled down to the work now in businesslike fashion. They were firing slowly and saving their cartridges. But even at this rate there would be none left in an hour. All round the reports were growing less and less, but occasionally they would break out in a fresh place as if some one had found a nest and poked it. The men began to complain of thirst.

The water bottles were emptied long ago.

But the sub was thinking again. If he had a hundred more men-and they could come up the path yet safely-he could throw out a line on the right, work round carefully and enflade the force in front; it would be simple enough. They might sweep the hill! Why had the colonel not followed out his suggestion; at least, why had he not sent up ammunition? He might have known

they would need it by this time.

He took out his notebook and scribbled a few lines, after making two or three false starts. Then he folded it.

The man hobbled after the sergeant. The others looked

tuneless whistle all to himself. He stopped suddenly. "They're in the hell of a muck down there," he said to the nearest man, nodding into the valley. The sub looked and fairly groaned. Men were running

this way and that-some on the flanks were lying flat be-

hind stones and firing up at the kepje-some were getting into their slings, with a sergeant hustling them as if they were a trifle tardy for roll call. In one case a company

was standing at attention as if for inspection. The Kaffirs were doing their best to get the mules into the harness, but some were down already, and others were clearing. A few men were hit, for he could see the stretcher bearers

come running from left to right. The scene had all the confusion of complete surprise. It would soon be worse! What if the Boers should reach the spur? But here came

"All I could get, sir-Mr. Mallon, he— We'll eatch it 'ot if we stay here, sir!"
"Fall in. Follow me at a double. Are magazines

With sixteen men behind him, the sub scrambled up to the little path and started up along it hot foot. He

did some thinking, too, as he ran. It would be a bit uncomfortable, if he should come out in the middle of them
when he reached the top, and it would be equally uncomfortable if caught halfway.

"There goes the guns, sir," panted the sergeant, who
had kept pace with him.

Sure caparb, as they entered the kloof the reports of

Sure enough, as they entered the kloof the reports of

The cavalry's getting it now," grunted the lance-cor-

That was just it. The party he had seen on the kopje

That was just it. The party he had seen on the koppe top was not all. "Must be a lot of 'em," thought the sub. But it was too late to draw back now. The guns were with the cavalry (it was not mounted infantry this time). They could save those guns if they tried to get back through the nek. As they debouched on to the little plateau his voice was shrill.

"We're in time segregat! Spread out you men! Lie."

"We're in time, sergeant! Spread out, you men! Lie down, lie down! Don't you see them? Here they comeclose to—along the path here—Fire! Fire!"

There was no question about it, the sub was excited.

"Down, down! and fire, you bally idiots!" he cried. (He quite forgot he was standing up in plain view.) A few shots were loosed before the Boers discovered that they were headed,, and now the reason for the delay in reach-

were headed, and now the reason for the delay in reaching the spot was clear. They were pushing and dragging a seven-pounder Krupp up the path. At the first shot they vanished among the rocks on either hand like gophers.

"Ave a care, sir," implored the sergeant. "For Gawd's sake, get down yourself, sir!" He put up his hand and gently grasped the long great coat, and as he did so the sub felt a quick tap on his helmet and sudden swift breath slore, ble helr. He crouted down still giving orders—

along his hair. He crouched down, still giving orders— quiet and cool now—though a glorious excitement was humming through him—the joy of the fighting man who

"Farther out on the left-crawl out-don't keep to There you are-save your ammunition. We can

He settled down beside the sergeant and poked his own rific-for all the company officers carry rifles-over the top of the stone in front.

The air was full of the crazy, little hurtling musical

The air was full of the crazy, little hurtling musical notes—changing from sharp to flat—singing out of key—whimpering shrilly—or whimpler lectously with a sound, half snap, half whistle, "Prr—tprrrtt" they would strike in among the rocks; "tzings—g" they would go glancing off. The Mausers were coughing out there among the rocks, but neither side had settled down to the slow and sure shooting that is the deadlest.

"Better fire from round the rock, not over it, sir," cautioned the sergeant, who had done hill-fighting in Tirah. A bit of nickel-steel had struck in close and filled the sub's face with stinging slivers of stone. "They see you, sir, that way."

The sub settled himself farther down on his elbows, and the sergeant's rifle barked.

"Got one, sir! He's kicking like a old—"
"Spati" The sub didn't dare to look. The sergeant's head had fallen forward with his face in his helmet, one of his feet quivered a moment, then he lay still.

A feeling half of sickness, half despair made the sub shut his eyes.

Why did men want to do this sort of thing? A dry sob came in his throat. "Why couldn't they-?" He shook the feeling off, and it never came again. It was all right. What would his grandfather say? He was there to save those guns!

"Steady there, men," he called. "Corporal—pass the

has dropped all sense of self.

artillery and bursting shells sounded over the line of

the sergeant, and with him five panting men

on the farther side.

charged?"

cd in the row.

"Want that taken down, sir?" asked the lance-corporal. "I'll take it."
"No, I want you to stay here."
"Let me go, sir." The man on the other side spoke up. He was a good soldier, with a handsome, dissipated face, a deplorable drunkard when he could get liquor.
"Let Talcott take the bottles, too, sir!—'Ere, pass slorg them bettles," should the corporal.

along them bottles," shouted the corporal.

They were tossed from shelter to shelter, and Talcott, half reclining, slipped the straps over his shoulders; then he took the note and buttoned it into his pocket. at one another and smiled, foolish, embarrassed smiles-one or two had nervous, half-frightened looks in their eyes. A tall lance-corporal began to breathe a soundless,

"Never fear, sir, I'll be back-I was born to die in a bed," he laughed. They watched him creep to where the path pitched

over the steep edge down into the slanting well. He rose to his feet, and then, as if thrown by an invisible wrestler, down he went with a jangle of the water-bottles, and lay there. As if encouraged by this, the Mausers started furiously.

The red-headed soldier, in the act of firing, lost the thumb of his left hand, the thumb of his right, and the buillet, glancing from the stock of his rife, traversed his cheek. In a minute he was a gory, helpless spectacle. But not a word did he utter. He twisted his hands into his tunic and lay back, the picture of despair,

An hour word by These were ten contriders left!

An hour went by. There were ten cartridges left! The guns beyond the hill had not fired a shot for fifteen minutes, but there was an intermittent snapping round the edge of the kople, and out in front there were some pains-taking marksmen lying well hid. The rocks on the crest were splotched with bullet marks, crushed and curled-up blobs of nickel and lead lay all about. But ten cartridges! Three belonged to him. The two men on flanks had thrown down their useless rifles-one lit his

pipe.
"I wonder where they'll take us to?" he half asked the man beside him

"Fix hayonets!" put in the sub suddenly.

The men looked at him as if they thought he had gone mad. But they obeyed, snapping the ugly knives to their rifle barrels, and then they lay there waiting. If he had told them to charge, they would have gone forward—it was none of their responsibility.

"Itset poles these beyoness over the reeks, you man."

"Just poke those bayonets over the rocks, you men," ordered the sub. "We'll show 'em what they'll get if they The strange signal of defiance flashed as the bright

blades caught the sun. It brought a drove of bullets, and the men lay close.

"Let 'em all come!" chortled the lance-corporal

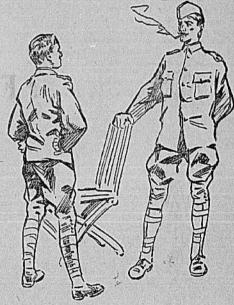
"'Ot and 'eavy-there goes the 'ten-a-penny,'" gasped a ghort-winded little private. The "chung-chung-chung" of the Vickers-Maxim join-"Let 'em all come!" chortled the lance-corporal.

Hardly had he speken, when from about six hundred yards, directly rear, a plunging fire came down. The Beers had gained the higher crest across the nek! There was no shelter now for the obstinate little band. They could be picked off—caught like rats in a bin. Almost before any one could move eight men were hit. The red-headed man was struck in the head and never stirred-killed outright. The little private next to the lance-corporal threw down his rifle, and ran for the path, bounding over the rocks like a rubber ball.

"For Gawd's gake, sir, let's out of this," groaned the corporal. "Run for it; there's no use staying here, sir." He rose to his knees and then crouched down again, his The sub's heart beat almost as loudly,
"'Ow! my word!" panted the sergeant. "Must be attackin' in force, sir!"

He rose to his knees and then crouched down again, his eyes filled with a wild appeal.

"Let's try to get out some of the wounded."



"YOU SEE, I—I—THOUGHT—"

sob came in his throat. "Why couldn't they—" He shook the feeling off, and it never came again. It was all right. What would his grandfather say? He was there to save those guns!

"Steady there, men," he called. "Corporal—pass the word to that man on the left to save his ammanition."

"'E thinks 'e's a blooming harsenal," muttered the corporal half to himself. "Hey, you, Perkins, wot'nell you firing at? Orders are let up on that!"

"Manley 'ere 'es' 'It," called a red-headed fellow down the line. "Keep still, lad; rollin' round won't help you!"

There was silence for a minute. Then: "Oh, my—oh, my," muttered a voice two or three times—it was not agroan, it was not even a complaint. "Let's 'ave your water-bottle, Bill—oh! Lord—move me a bit, carn't you?"

The red-headed one half rose.

"As you were!" said the sub sternly. "There's no use having two."

The way the bullets were driving over the plateau would have meant sure death to any moving thing out of the shelter of the rocks. The men lay with their heads down. They looked as if they were holding on a avoid heing blown away. The artillery and the "pompom" were having a merry time over the hill now.

"Manley, we'll get to you in a minute—just a minute," said the sub, putting as much encouragement in his voice as possible.

"The all right—all right, sir," answered the man faintly. Then he began to cough.

"E's done for, sir," muttered the corporal, "Good Gawd—ere they come."

There was a full in the firing, and then at the word the Lee-Metfords began. They swept the advancing Boers out of the path, and once more they scuttled in among the rocks. But another man had caught it, and was lying still off on the right.

"We've stopped them," remarked the private next to the lance-corporal. "Het a tenner they won't try that night."

Then everybody lay without talking for a time, only the shots answered one another back and forth. "Put—

"Lord, sir! There won't be no wounded. They're firin' 'eavier, sir; worst I ever see."

"Come, then!" The boy almost sobbed.

"Keep low—crawl, sir—Gawd, that was close!"

"No; I can't leave them, corporal!"

"Then I'll stay with you, sir."

The absolute hopelessness was sickening. The sub groaned. His will was leaving him; everything within him was crying; 'Run, run!" The chance of reaching the edge of the gorge was slight; he hated to leave his stricken men. Yet he saw that to stay meant sooner of later a bullet would find him. The Mausers on the hill behind kept potting steadily, and their range was excellent. Suddenly a wounded man spoke.

"Better leave us here, get away if you can, sir."

The men were right, there was no use staying. Besides, if one started the enemy might see that the rest were disabled and stop fring. He rose to his knees. "Come, corporal. We'll make a try for It."

"Yes, sir. I'm with you, sir."

They gained the path in safety, and plinged down.

How they reached the bottom neither could have told. But when they made the sloping hill outside, the corporal half stumbled.

"I've—got it, sir." he faltered.

"Are you badly hit?"

"Not much—the arm—keep on, sir."

On they ran. Way, way shead they could see what was left of the regiment across the spruit. They were going black the way they had come. The guins were not with them! Nearby, the Boers were looting the wagons. There were many limp, huddled figures among the rocks. Although the sub did not know it, his own colonel was over there on the right, wounded and a prisoner. Ho slipped his arm through the corporal's, and they bore away to the left. No one fired at them now. In fifteen minutes they reached the spruit and lay down on the bank to breathe.

"We're well out of that mess," gasped the corporal, "Oh, thanks—sir—it's but a scratch."

The sub did not feply. He was bandaging the corporal's arm with his bandkerchief, but he was thinking of one thing. He had not saved the guns!

Late the next day the adjutant of the regiment entered the club, for they were all back once more (what was left of them) in the conquered town.

"Hello, young man!" he called to some one at one of the writing tests, "Heard you'd got back safely. Where